

Message Text

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64

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 AID-20 OMB-01 NIC-01 DRC-01 /121 W

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R 221640Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5056

USCINCSO

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USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, MILI, AR

SUBJ: FURTHER DETAILS OF AZUL ATTACK

1. SUMMARY: ERP HAS ADMITTED RESPONSIBILITY FOR AZUL ATTACK AND TERMS ITS EFFORTS A FAILURE. WHILE LITTLE INFORMATION FROM OFFICIAL SOURCES IS AVAILABLE, EVIDENCE MOUNTS THAT MANY OF THE PARTICIPANTS IN AZUL ATTACK WERE, CONTRARY TO FIRST REPORTS, KILLED OR CAPTURED. POLICE AND ARMY UNITS ARE CONDUCTING LARGE SCALE OPERATION IN FEDERAL CAPITAL, B.A. PROVINCE AND ROSARIO. END SUMMARY.

2. IN WAKE OF AZUL ATTACK, ARMY AND POLICE UNITS (FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL) CONTINUE INTENSE EFFORTS TO ROUND-UP EXTREMISTS INVOLVED IN RAID (AND PROBABLY SOME WHO WERE NOT). THOUGH OFFICIAL SOURCES HAVE ADDED ALMOST NO NEW DETAILS IN ADDITION TO THOSE PROVIDED JAN 20, RESPONSIBLE PRESS (LA NACION, LA PRENSA) QUOTE "OFFICIALS CLOSE TO THE INVESTIGATION" AS SAYING APPROXIMATELY 10 TERRORISTS, SOME WOUNDED, HAVE ALREADY BEEN ARRESTED. THE POLICE HAVE ALSO LOCATED A HOUSE NEAR AZUL THAT WAS THE APPARENT STAGING POINT FOR THE ATTACK. INSIDE, POLICE FOUND "A VERY LARGE" ASSORTMENT OF WEAPONS IN ADDITION TO ARMY

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UNIFORMS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT. SEVERAL OF THE CARS USED BY

THE TERRORISTS IN THEIR ESCAPE ATTEMPTS HAVE BEEN LOCATED IN VARIOUS PARTS OF BA PROVINCE. THE AUTOS, ALL RECENTLY STOLEN, CONTAINED LARGE QUANTITIES OF ARMS AND AMMUNITION.

3. PRESS REPORTS QUOTING AZUL POLICE OFFICIALS AND NEARBY RESIDENTS INDICATE THAT THE DEATH TOLL AMONG THE TERRORISTS MAY REACH 20. ARMY REPORTS CONTINUE TO PUT OUT THE STORY THAT ONLY TWO TERRORISTS WERE KILLED IN THE RAID.

4. ANOTHER STORY WIDELY REPORTED IN PRESS SAYS FEDERAL POLICE IN FEDERAL DISTRICT HAVE ARRESTED UP TO TWO HUNDRED SUSPECTS IN LAST TWO DAYS. ROSARIO POLICE ARE ALSO REPORTED TO BE ARRESTING ERP SUSPECTS AND SYMPATHIZERS.

5. THE ERP ISSUED A STATEMENT ON THE AFTERNOON OF JAN 21 TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE AZUL RAID AND CLAIMING THEY WERE HOLDING LTG IBARZABAL IN A "PEOPLE'S PRISON". THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT ALLOW THE LOCAL PRESS TO PUBLISH THE COMMUNIQUE THOUGH ONE PAPER, THE BUENOS AIRES HERALD, DID QUOTE FROM THE STATEMENT IN THIS MORNING'S EDITION (JAN 22). ACCORDING TO THE HERALD THE COMMUNIQUE ADMITS THAT THE ATTACK WAS A FAILURE. THE ERP DENIES THAT IT EXECUTED MRS GAY, THE BASE COMMANDER'S WIFE, AND SAYS SHE WAS KILLED IN THE GENERAL SHOOT-OUT. THEY ALSO NOTE THAT "SOME OF OUR FORCES WERE CUT OFF INSIDE AZUL BY ARMY TROOPS." THIS LAST ADDS CREDENCE TO PRESS REPORTS THAT CASUALTIES AMONG TERRORISTS HIGHER THAN OFFICIAL FIGURES.

6. THE BUENOS AIRES HERALD ALSO REPORTS THAT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IMPEDED THE PAPER EL MUNDO FROM PUTTING OUT ITS FIRST EDITION ON AFTERNOON OF 21ST. AFTER SOME CHANGES IN STORY ON AZUL A SECOND EDITION WAS PRINTED BUT LATER IT WAS CONFISCATED.

7. UNIFORMED MILITARY PERSONNEL FROM THIS EMBASSY ATTENDED THE SERVICES FOR COL GAY.

8. COMMENT: WHILE ERP'S MOTIVES, APART FROM SHOW OF STRENGTH AND EMBARRASSING GOVERNMENT NOT *COMPLETELY CLEAR, IT IS BECOMING APPARENT THAT THE TERRORISTS HAVE SUFFERED A SETBACK. KILLING OF MRS GAY UNDER WHATEVER CIRCUMSTANCES (AND ARMY STORY APPEARS ACCEPTED VERSION) HAS SHOCKED EVEN THE VIOLENCE HARDENED
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ARGENTINES. ERP'S LOSSES WHICH APPEAR TO BE CONSIDERABLE WILL BE HARD TO REPLACE. MOST IMPORTANTLY FROM LEVEL OF EFFORT OBSERVED SO FAR IT IS CLEAR THAT THE ATTACK HAS UNITED, FOR MOMENT, THE GOVERNMENT AND POPULAR OPINION IN COMMON CAUSE AGAINST TERRORIST MOVEMENT.
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